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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 4, 2015

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LCSO Offers Driving Safety Tips as Forecasted Winter Storm Approaches

Loudoun County, VA – The National Weather Service has issued a Winter Storm Warning for Wednesday evening and Thursday and the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office is reminding motorists that winter driving can be hazardous, especially with the prediction of significant snowfall.

Loudoun County Sheriff Mike Chapman is advising motorists to make sure their vehicles are equipped with a well-stocked winter driving kit.

A winter driving kit should include the following items:

- Properly fitting tire chains
- Bag of sand or salt (or kitty litter)
- Tow Straps
- Traction mats
- Snow shovel
- Snow brush
- Ice scraper
- Booster cables
- Warning devices such as flares or emergency lights
- Fuel line de-icer (methanol, also called methyl alcohol or methyl hydrate)
- Extra windshield wiper fluid appropriate for sub-freezing temperatures
- Roll of paper towels
- Flashlight and a portable flashing light (and extra batteries)
- Blanket
- Extra clothing, including hat and wind-proof pants, and warm footwear
- First aid kit
- Snack bars or other "emergency" food and water
- Matches and emergency candles. Only use these with a window opened to prevent build-up of carbon monoxide.
- Road maps
- "Call Police" or other help signs or brightly colored banners.

The Loudoun Sheriff's Office reminds motorists to stay safe in the winter by also following these driving safety tips:

- ✓ Always keep the gas tank topped off. When it gets to half, fill it up.
- ✓ Turn on your headlights.
- ✓ Do not travel unless absolutely necessary. If you do have to make the trip, ensure someone is aware of your route of travel.
- ✓ Carry a cellular phone. Your cell phone can be used during emergencies and for notifying those expecting your arrival in case there are weather delays.
- ✓ Always buckle-up. Your seat belt can be the best protection against drivers who are tense and in a hurry because of weather conditions.
- ✓ Clear snow and ice from all windows and lights – even the hood and roof – before driving.
- ✓ Pay attention. Don't try to out-drive the conditions. Remember the posted speed limits are for dry pavement.
- ✓ Leave plenty of room for stopping.
- ✓ Leave room for maintenance vehicles and plows – stay back a safe stopping distance and don't pass on the right.
- ✓ Know the current road conditions: <http://511virginia.org>; for statewide highway information 24-hours-a-day, call the Highway Helpline at 1-800-367-ROAD or check local traffic incident information at <http://sheriff.loudoun.gov/traffic>.
- ✓ Use brakes carefully. Brake early. Brake correctly. It takes more time to stop in adverse conditions.
- ✓ Watch for slippery bridges, even when the rest of the pavement is in good condition. Bridges will ice up sooner than the adjacent pavement.
- ✓ Don't use your cruise control in wintry conditions. Even roads that appear clear can have sudden slippery spots and the short touch of your brakes to deactivate the cruise control feature can cause you to lose control of your vehicle.
- ✓ Don't get overconfident in your 4x4 vehicle. Remember that your four-wheel drive vehicle may help you get going quicker than other vehicles but it won't help you stop any faster. Many 4x4 vehicles are heavier than passenger vehicles and actually may take longer to stop. Don't get overconfident in your 4x4 vehicle's traction. Your 4x4 can lose traction as quickly as a two-wheel drive vehicle.

- ✓ Do not pump anti-lock brakes. If your car is equipped with anti-lock brakes, do not pump brakes in attempting to stop. The right way is to “stomp and steer!”
- ✓ Look farther ahead in traffic than you normally do. Actions by cars and trucks will alert you quicker to problems and give you a split-second extra time to react safely.
- ✓ Remember that trucks are heavier than cars. Trucks take longer to safely respond and come to a complete stop, so avoid cutting quickly in front of them.

Go Slow!

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